# Conference Report

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## *The Path to the Good Life*

**Aboriginal Women's Conference**

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March 13 - 15, 2006

Happy Valley-Goose Bay

Newfoundland
Labrador

## FOREWORD

The conference was viewed as an historic first step for Aboriginal women. The hope is that the recommendations indicated here will increase dialogue, enabling more open communications between the various levels of government, Aboriginal women and the society at large in order to address, in a coordinated and holistic manner, the key concerns identified by Aboriginal women.

The conference planning committee chose the conference theme, *The Path to the Good Life for Aboriginal Women*, based on the work of Kim Anderson, an Aboriginal woman who mapped out the route to a more positive Aboriginal female identity through interviewing Aboriginal women across the country. She found that Aboriginal women arrive at a place of health and balance by engaging in a process of resistance, cultural reclamation and a reconstruction of traditional ways to fit a modern existence. Through Ms. Anderson's work, the conference planning committee developed the themes of Standing Strong, Our Issues – Our Strengths, Preparing for the Journey, and A Plan for Lasting Change.

Conference planners and partners are grateful to have had the opportunity to facilitate this coming together of Aboriginal women. It has been an opportunity to support the gathering and receiving of stories, highlight what can be done and what is being done in Aboriginal communities, and discuss next steps for the Good Life of Aboriginal women. It has been an opportunity to demonstrate that working together can make a difference.

Conference organizers would like to express their deepest thanks to the Innu, Inuit, Métis, and Mi'kmaq Elders, who participated from their communities, and gave of themselves in building a circle of hope and strength, and moving along the Path to the Good Life for Aboriginal women.

Thank you also to the Honorable Tom Rideout and the Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, and the Honorable Joan Burke, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, the Women's Policy Office, and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador for their financial and planning support, and to the Voisey's Bay Nickel Company Ltd. for sponsoring the conference banquet.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The first Provincial Aboriginal Women Conference took place in Happy Valley-Goose Bay from March 13th-15th, 2006.

The conference brought together approximately 75 women from a variety of different communities - Innu, Inuit, Mi'kmaq, and Métis as well as representatives of Aboriginal women living in urban areas. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador was represented by the Honorable Joan Burke, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, the Honorable Tom Rideout, Minister Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs, and various officials from the Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs and the Women's Policy Office. Also in attendance were Zippie Nochasak, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Nunatsiavut Government, and Chief Anastasia Qupee of the Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation.

The conference was entitled *The Path to the Good Life*, and it focused on exploring ways in which Aboriginal women could move towards the creation of a good life for themselves, their families and their communities. The theme of *The Path to the Good Life* was taken from the work of Kim Anderson, who defined it through four key concepts: to resist, to reclaim, to construct, and to act. From these four concepts, the planning committee developed the Conference themes: Standing Strong, Our Issues - Our Strengths, Preparing for The Journey, and A Plan for Lasting Change.

Consultations were held from December to February with Aboriginal women from almost 50 communities in Newfoundland and Labrador to discuss conference objectives and seek input on the conference agenda and logistics.

The conference delegates, from youth to elders, represented a wide variety of occupations and disciplines, creating an excellent cross section of the strengths of Aboriginal women from across the province. Community groups, government leaders and policy makers were also invited to participate in the conference by attending the wrap-up plenary discussions, and the conference banquet.

The main goals of the conference included the following:

- To provide an opportunity for Aboriginal women to connect in a supportive way;
- To share their experiences as Aboriginal women and to discover and honour their strengths;
- To ensure that their diverse voices are heard; and,
- To share their plans and priorities for lasting change with each other and government leaders.

The conference produced a number of key issues of concern to Aboriginal women. This report groups these concerns into interconnected themes including: culture, health care, governance, violence, justice, education and training, housing, access to programs and funding, and employment.

The perseveration of culture, language and traditions was important to Aboriginal women regardless of their origin. Women noted that the preservation of their cultures can strengthen the social foundation of their communities and thus can help address other issues faced by Aboriginal communities.

Concerns identified relating to health care included alcohol and drug abuse, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), suicide prevention and resources for crisis response teams. Women also noted the need to address specific health care issues such as cancer rates, heart disease and obesity, as well as the need for more female doctors, counselors and mental health practitioners available to Aboriginal women and Aboriginal communities.

Concerns related to Governance included the ability for Aboriginal women to have a sense of self-governance, even within larger governmental structures. Women felt that addressing this issue would help to eradicate many of the socio-cultural issues that affect their communities. Women also raised the need to have more Aboriginal women occupying positions of leadership.

Violence was raised as a significant issue throughout the conference. Women noted that violence in communities is often related to the presence of alcohol abuse, which in turn is related to a lack of employment, which forces individuals to look outside their communities for work. Recommendations were made for a 24 hour a day crisis phone

line in communities (particularly remote communities that lack other crisis services) that would ensure a point of contact for women seeking immediate removal from crisis situations. As well, the need for increased funding to women's groups and centres was addressed, and the need for more counselors for victims of abuse.

Women also identified issues within the justice system including a perceived lack of understanding and racial sensitivity by those employed by the Justice system. Women suggested that more Aboriginal people work in the Justice System and an Aboriginal initiative to promote healing would help address this issue. Women also identified the need for increased policing in some areas and increase access to Legal Aid and translation.

Access to support and resources to help women with the job process (resumes, filling out applications) was suggested when discussing education and training. The need for further funding for the secondary school system was also raised, along with concerns over the low educational standards among coastal communities in Labrador. More incentives to keep youth in school was also raised as a concern, as well as the need for more career counseling at the high school level, especially for young girls.

The need for affordable, quality housing was raised as an issue particularly on the coast of Labrador and in communities such as North West River and Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Housing for Aboriginal women living in urban areas was also raised as a concern, as these women often do not have access to the cultural supports that would be accessible to them in Aboriginal communities.

The knowledge of what funding and programs are available is a strong tool for Aboriginal women in addressing issues within their communities. Women raised the need for funding of projects to be provided on a consistent basis.

Having access to gainful employment in their local communities was a very important issue for many Aboriginal women. The availability of employment for Aboriginal women is a crucial part of maintaining valuable cultural ties within their communities, and ensuring that they are able to stay close to their communities and families. It was also noted that Aboriginal women have a lower annual income than men, which makes it especially difficult on single mothers.

There were also general concerns made surrounding the situation for Aboriginal women as a whole. The importance in understanding the cyclical nature, and interconnection of these issues, was consistently highlighted. When a concern or issue is addressed it is important that it be considered in relation to other concerns, so that the solution can encompass as many facets as possible which are directly tied to the overall improvement and preservation of Aboriginal culture and societies.

***How the Conference Came to Be***

On March 8th, 2005 the Honorable Joan Burke announced funding for a conference to enable Aboriginal women to come together to identity critical social and economic needs and priorities, and develop a plan to address them. A conference planning committee was formed with a membership consisting of leaders from provincial Aboriginal organizations, Aboriginal women, the Women's Policy Office and Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

The conference was the first of its kind to bring together Aboriginal women from across the province to learn from each other, and to set priorities and make plans toward improving the qualities of their lives. In using the theme, *The Path to the Good Life*, four concepts were identified to guide the conference process; Resist, Reclaim, Reconstruct and Act.

***Consultation process***

Consultations were held from December to February with Aboriginal women from almost 50 communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. The process was guided by six coordinators – Michelle Ploughman, Melita Paul, Cynthia Hamel, Mary Pia Benuen, Karen Miller, and Mary Jane Edmunds – with input from Myrtle Banfield, Zippie Nochasak and Benigna Andersen. The background and objectives of the conference were explained, and through a series of activities and questions, women were asked for input into the draft agenda, and the conference logistics. A summary of *What We Heard* can be found in ***Appendix A***.

***Conference Objectives***

The objectives of the conference were numerous and varied. They included: being able to provide an opportunity for Aboriginal women to connect in a supportive environment; to share our experiences as Aboriginal women and discover and honor our strengths, and to make sure that our voices are heard. Finally it is important that we have an

opportunity to share our priorities and experiences with government, in order to develop a plan for lasting change.

***Conference Attendees***
Of the total 60 registered conference delegates, 59 were in attendance. With conference volunteers taken into consideration the total number of participants reached approximately 80. The delegates represented a number of different groups including the Innu, the Inuit, the Métis, the Mi'kmaq, as well as Aboriginal women living in urban centres.

The conference delegates also represented a broad number of professions and positions. Some of these included (but are not limited to) the areas of counseling, health and mental health, education, communications, social services, policing, research and policy, suicide prevention, addictions, injury prevention, community outreach, crisis management, youth support, administration and elders programs.
A full list of Conference delegates can be found in ***Appendix B***.

The two full days of the conference consisted of a series of workshops, speakers and panels allowing Aboriginal women to voice our concerns toward finding a path to the Good Life. A complete agenda for the conference can be found in ***Appendix C***. In addition, opening comments made by Conference Facilitator, Judy White, can be found in ***Appendix D***. The keynote address given by the Honourable Joan Burke, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador can be found in ***Appendix E***.

***Workshops***

The workshop which took place on the first day of the conference was entitled *Our Issues- Our Strengths*. It focused on highlighting the various issues relevant to the Aboriginal groups represented at the Conference. Four circles were formed with facilitators from each of the Aboriginal groups, along with note-takers from the Women's Policy Office, and a representative from the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women. The discussion centered on the various issues and strengths identified from each particular circle. The major issues identified included: health and well-being, children and youth, housing, justice, violence and violence against women, education and training, employment and income, leadership, and culture and voice. The specific discussions from each group can be found in ***Appendix F***.

The second day of the conference had one workshop, consisting of two sessions. The first entitled *Preparing for the Journey* allowed the various groups to take the issues highlighted in the previous day's workshop and discuss specifically how they can assist in preparing for the journey (i.e. how to attain the *Good Life for Aboriginal women*). The second part of the workshop entitled, *A Plan for Lasting Change*, allowed participants to reconvene and look at how to affect a plan for lasting change. The purpose of this session was for each group to set short, medium and long term goals for their specific group to assist in addressing the issues identified. The full results can be found in ***Appendix G***.

***Speeches and Panels***

The conference also had a number of speeches and panels, as well as a plenary Discussion at the end of the second day.

The speeches from Day One included an opening message from the Honorable Joan Burke, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (***Appendix E***). The Honorable Tom Rideout, Minister Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs, also gave a greeting at the evening's Banquet (***Appendix H***).

Zippie Nochasak, the Minister Responsible for Inuit Women, Nunatsiavut Government. Minister Nochasak gave a luncheon presentation during the second day of the conference. The presentation focused on the ability of Aboriginal women to actualize the Good Life, through a focus on reclaiming traditions, honoring the past, making change happen, creating opportunities, and moving forward. A full text of Minister Nochasak's speech can be found in ***Appendix I***.

On the second day of the conference, a panel discussion was held entitled *Standing Strong*, which highlighted the stories of five Aboriginal women. The women represented the various Aboriginal groups within the province, and presented their life struggles and their techniques in remaining strong as daughters, mothers, and grandmothers – the epitome of strong Aboriginal women. A complete description of the *Standing Strong* panel can be found in ***Appendix J***.

The final plenary Discussions of the conference allowed participants, spokespeople and facilitators from the various groups to present their findings. In attendance at the plenary session were government representatives, Aboriginal leaders, and policy makers. Committee members felt including these various groups emphasized the fullness of the relationships between the Aboriginal communities, governments and other interest groups. A full listing of invited guests and plenary attendees are located in ***Appendix K***.

***Cultural Exchanges***

The conference also included a number of opportunities for participants from the various groups to share in cultural displays and exchanges. These cultural exchanges are integral to the process of allowing Aboriginal women to express our cultures and experiences. They also form a crucial part in allowing us to share our strengths, and make our voices heard. These events included as Smuge Ceremony (led by Kelly Drew); a Stone Sharing Exercise (led by Judy White); a Métis Prayer (led by Elder Florence Alder); a Banquet and Feast which included cultural

displays, events and exchanges (full agenda can be found in ***Appendix L***), a Inuit ceremony (*The Tkullik*, provided by Inuit Elders), a play (*The Dancers*) by the Next Generation Guardians of Natuashish, and an Innu prayer (provided by Elder Monique Rich). A full description of each event can be found in ***Appendix M***.

## THE *PATH* TO THE GOOD LIFE – CRITICAL CONCERNS IDENTIFIED

The following section addresses the critical concerns, suggestions and recommendations brought forward by participants during the workshop, panel and plenary discussions.

The nine key themes include: **culture, health care, governance, violence, justice, education and training, housing, access to programs and funding, and employment**. Issues under each theme are then listed according to Aboriginal group. Not all groups focused on the same concerns, or to the same degree, but the specific points made under each heading represent the critical concerns that must be addressed to bring about justice, health, healing, safety, prosperity, and cultural wellness for Aboriginal women in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Although this is not an exhaustive list of themes, they are largely representative of the majority of the issues facing Aboriginal women. It should also be noted that many concerns are applicable to more than one thematic heading; in cases such as this, the concern was addressed on the basis of its primary origin. As an example, the need for a safe house for women is both a housing and violence issue, but it is addressed here under the thematic heading of violence. Although all of the concerns are crucial and valid, not all Aboriginal women focused on the same concerns, or to the same degree, therefore, some of the nine identified concerns are not addressed under all the groups.

### Culture

Cultural preservation of language and traditions are crucial to Aboriginal women, regardless of their Aboriginal origin. It forms the backbone of their societies and their communities. Cultural exchange can also act as a point of contact between differing groups, with the end goal of solving shared problems and creating networks of support and communication. It is also important to ensure that culture and traditions can be passed on to youth from the elders. Women from all groups made note of the need for a model of cultural preservation

that provides them with a sense of fulfillment and pride. There was a suggestion made for the creation of an Aboriginal Women's Week, which would act as catalyst for cultural exchange so that Aboriginal women from around the province (and potentially from the other Atlantic Provinces) could come together and exchange ideas. It would also be beneficial for urban Aboriginal women, in that it would decrease the isolation they experience from not being located within Aboriginal communities.

***Inuit***

- The ability to link the Ulapitaijer committee with other community oriented committees would do a great deal to improve the overall well-being of the community. Having a strong social foundation within the community can increase its cohesive nature, thereby preventing social erosion and decreasing the prevalence of specific health related issues. This will improve the overall quality of community life.

- There are also additional language related issues in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Women in this community noted that everything is conducted in English which limits the ability for cultural preservation.

- Programs for youth including increased use of Inuktitut and cultural traditions were identified as necessary.

***Innu***

- It was noted that provisions may need to be made for self-esteem workshops in the communities. This has been shown to be an integral part of eliminating the detrimental effects of drugs and alcohol on the community. Improving the self-esteem of youth in Innu communities would be incredibly useful in demonstrating how healthy communities can be constructed on a foundation of culture, *without* the influences of drugs and alcohol.

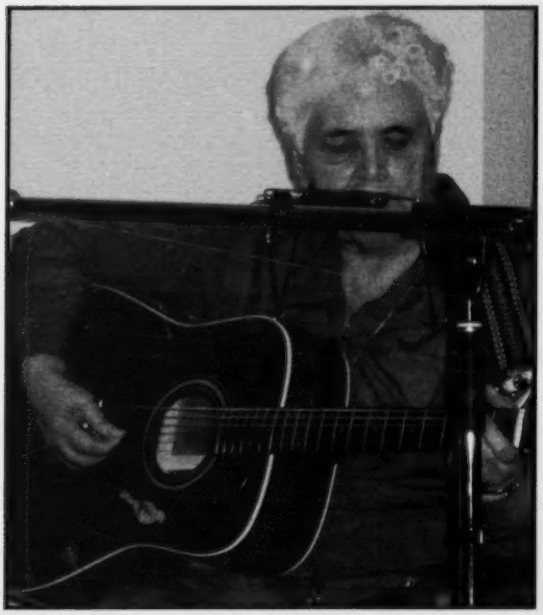
***Mi'kmaq***

- Many of the concerns presented by the Mi'kmaq women focused around youth and elderly within the community, especially as these two groups relate to the preservation of Mi'kmaq culture. Specifically, additional funding is needed to support recreation programs for youth, as well as a seniors' centre in Conne River where the youth can foster and develop closer cultural ties with elders. It was also emphasized that looking after the elders of the community is an important activity. Having such relationships between the youth and the elders allows for an overall promotion of the culture and cultural knowledge,

and takes integral steps in preserving the culture as well.

- Involving the youth in exercises of cultural preservation will strengthen community bonds.

- Preservation of the culture is required to strengthen the bonds of all residents with connections to their cultural roots.



- It was also noted that points of contact are needed with other Mi'kmaq not only in Newfoundland, but also in the sister provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. There needs to be a feeling that the Mi'kmaq are respected by their respective provincial governments, as well as a sense that even those Mi'kmaq living off-reserve can have access to language and culture. This desire for connection also extended beyond culture to include spirituality.

***Métis***

- There was a strong sense that there needs to be a more cohesive set of priorities established by Métis women from all over the province, which can emphasize the fact that Métis women are proud of their heritage, culture and ability to survive.

- There existed considerable confusion surrounding language and identity, which was largely due to their lack of status. It was communicated that this confusion largely expressed itself as prohibiting a full connection with their cultural roots.

- Métis women noted that an increase in funding is required to ensure that cultural promotion could take place.

- It was also noted that an emphasis is needed on cultural education for younger Métis, as it is challenging to find a future direction when one is unsure of one's origins. The presence of a Women's Group would help to make such cultural education an established part of the curriculum, in addition to bridging the gap between Métis youth and elders.

***Urban Aboriginals***

- The relationship between Aboriginal youth and elders in urban areas needs to be substantially improved, along with an improvement in partnerships with other Aboriginal groups.

- Secure and assured funding for language maintenance in urban centres was also recommended.

- Aboriginal women located in urban centres often face cultural stereotyping that is exacerbated by a lack of culturally sensitive service provision.

- The need was highlighted for a culturally appropriate daycare section located in the Friendship Centre in St. John's.

***Critical concerns raised during the consultation process***

- The need to have an Aboriginal Women's Group that can operate out of the Native Friendship Center in St. John's was identified.

## Health Care

With regards to health care, many women felt that health care encompassed a wide variety of issues, and served as a catalyst for discussion of other critical concerns. The concerns surrounding alcohol and substance abuse are directly related to health care concerns such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), as well as an increase in violence within the communities. Women also noted that in order to take care of their families they needed to care for themselves first. All the women noted the need for specific health care issues to be addressed. These included, but were not limited to, cancer rates, heart disease and obesity. There is also an increased need for more female doctors, as well as counseling and mental health practitioners. By addressing some of the health care recommendations made by participants, broader social issues can also be addressed.

***Inuit***

- Concrete solutions, suggestions and resources are needed to deal with suicide prevention and effectively eradicate this social occurrence.

- Increased ability of the communities is needed to address health concerns raised by youth. Rather than exporting the youth to external communities that separates them from the potential for cultural healing within their communities, keeping them close by allows for consistent monitoring which encompasses a more holistic, community oriented approach to healing.

***Innu***

- There was a need identified for continuous and sustained workshops to deal with the presence of FASD within the communities, rather than having something on a one-time basis that cannot provide consistent support for families and communities who are faced with the effects of this disorder on a daily basis.

- Great concern was given to the prevalence of suicide within the communities, especially its impact on youth. Increasing public awareness through mechanisms such as campaigns that would publicize the issue within the communities, facilitating discussion and communication was recommended. It was also noted that simply letting the youth of the community know that they are loved and cared for would do a great deal to improve the situation. Family support is also necessary, as well as taking serious all activities related to suicide.
- Providing crisis response teams, which are paid on salary, was suggested as a means to provide a consistent presence and support network for youth. It was noted that both Innu communities could/would work together to develop the crisis response team, and this would establish a valuable forum for an exchange of ideas.

- Women from Natuashish pointed to the need to be able to take care of themselves first, before they can take care of their families.

- The need to increase the education campaigns relating to drug and alcohol awareness

within both the school systems and the communities at large. The Innu women noted that visual forms of education seemed to be the most effective method of prevention. In addition to visual education, it was suggested that recovering addicts be able to use their experiences as part of an education toward prevention curriculum, both in schools and the community. It was also noted that elders could serve as an important point of education and knowledge transmission for those in the community. This would also do a great deal to address issues surrounding the erosion of cultural traditions, especially when it comes to the issues of drugs and alcohol.

***Mi'kmaq***

- Health care issue within Burgeo was raised as a concern, as services have been cut and there is now a long way to travel for hospital services. There is also an issue of the increasing prevalence of 'heavy drugs' within the community, and the increase in drug related problems.

- In addition, an increase in resources available to disabled individuals is needed within the community.

***Métis***

- It was noted that the lack of emphasis on health care in communities makes it exceptionally difficult to address other issues. An example of this is the negative influence of drugs and alcohol; these reach far into the social aspects of the communities, producing shame and distance.

- Along with addressing the impact of addiction, additional resources (funding) to address mental health issues to improve the social climate within the communities (specifically dealing with the Mental Health Act) was identified.

***Urban Aboriginals***

- An increase in interpreters available in the health care system was suggested as a way to ensure health services are accessible to Aboriginal people living in urban areas.

***Critical concerns raised during the consultation process***

- Long-term support and care for seniors

- Access to specialists in Labrador (dentists, psychiatric specialists, obstetricians) and the difficulty of flying out for medical attention.

- Health care costs, and the lack of insurance coverage.

- Instances of child neglect that are attributed to problems with gambling and bootlegging.

- The need for more physical activities for youth in order to prevent chronic health problems (obesity, heart disease).

- An increase in sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and teenage pregnancies among youth populations.

## Governance

The ability for Aboriginal women to have a sense of self governance, even within larger governmental structures, is a crucial step in being able to eradicate many of the socio-cultural issues that plague their communities. There is a need for more Aboriginal women to occupy positions of leadership. Having Provincial, Federal and Aboriginal leaders who are aware of the gravity of these situations, and who can communicate with Aboriginal women's groups, is a large step towards finding a balance to ensure that these socio-cultural concerns can be addressed.

***Inuit***

- It was identified that leaders need to increase the attention that is paid to social and health related issues. Having a strong voice in Aboriginal governance will ensure that these needs are met.

- Strong relationships exist between Inuit leaders and their Provincial and Federal counterparts. This strong relationship is of special importance for Aboriginal women's groups since they would be the most apt at communicating the needs of Inuit women to Inuit leaders and the Provincial and Federal governments.

***Innu***

- The Innu women made note of the importance of bylaws being enforced with regard to drugs and alcohol abuse. Innu women also identified the lack of financial support, making it challenging to initiate change.

- The importance of *internal* consultation in order to improve the ability to communicate their needs to an *external* audience was noted.

***Mi'kmaq***

- An emphasis on government working in closer relationship with those on the ground is essential. There are communications issues, which when improved will advance the availability of specific services.

- Mi'kmaq women commented that internal consultation is just as important as sharing among other groups.

***Métis***

- A formal recognition by the Federal and Provincial Governments regarding the status of Métis is crucial to ensuring adequate funding that is comparative to that of the Inuit and Innu.

- There is a need among Métis women for strong leadership and increased cultural preservation.

***Urban Aboriginals***

- No specific mention.

***Critical concerns raised during the consultation process***

- In some situations politics may be getting in the way of cooperation and with this comes a lack of accountability.

- There needs to be more respect shown to female Aboriginal leaders.

- There was a concern in the overall lack of women's voices in their communities, especially in positions of leadership, which often means that women's issues are not heard, nor are they treated with an equal degree of respect or consideration.

- There needs to be a greater voice for Aboriginal women on governing and decision making bodies like Health and Education Boards.

- There is a need for a paid coordinator to build and foster leadership programs among Aboriginal women.

## Violence

The prevention of violence within Aboriginal communities was one of the key concerns raised at the conference. Violence is often a direct result of other breakdowns in the social fabric. The level of violence in communities is related to the presence of alcohol abuse, which is in turn is related to a lack of employment, which forces individuals to look outside their communities for work.

***Inuit***

- There is a need for a safe house in Rigolet. This will allow for additional resources to be present within that community to deal with issues of violence against women.

***Innu***

- To ensure that there is a point of contact for women seeking immediate removal from crisis situations, it was suggested that a 24 hour crisis phone line to be installed in the communities.

- The presence of family violence is a major issue. There is a need to educate the population about the types of violence, increase the public profile of violence in the community, and teach community members skills to mediate through potential conflicts and altercations. This was of special importance when it came to educating young women about being able to leave violent relationships.

- Coupled with this there needs to be an emphasis on understanding the types and ranges of violence (i.e. that it can encompass emotional and physical abuse, bullying, and elder abuse).

- The presence of community oriented support groups and sharing circles may help to alleviate the strain on the community.

***Mi'kmaq***

- Funding to assist a Women's Group within the community of Conne River was suggested to help deal with family violence. Encouraging community members to visit the Women's Shelter and Centre, and providing information to the community at large would increase the profile of the shelter.

- There needs to be an increase in the public profile of violence against women and children within the community, and additional financial support for women.

***Métis***

- There is a lack of services specifically for Métis women. In particular, there is a lack of clinics, shelters and financial support on the South Coast and Straits.

***Urban Aboriginals***

- The need for Aboriginal counselors for abuse victims in urban areas, as well as an Aboriginal Women's Centre, was identified to better prevent violence and provide support to victims of violence in urban areas. More involvement of Aboriginal communities in providing services for women in urban areas was also recommended.

- Concerns were raised about a general lack of awareness within the Aboriginal community about the impacts of violence.

***Critical concerns raised during the consultation process relating to violence***

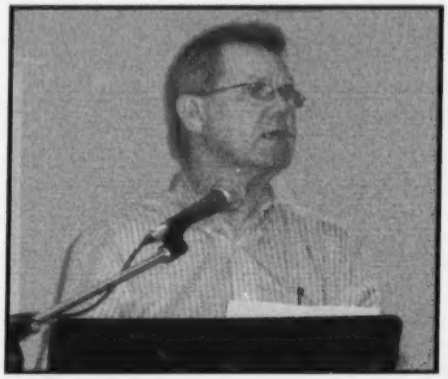
- An increase in violence in the Goose Bay area.

- In many communities people who occupy positions of influence and commit acts of violence are not punished as harshly as others who are not in the same position.

- More safe-havens for women and children are needed.

## Justice

There was a consensus reached that changes needed to be made to the Justice System to ensure that Aboriginal women did not find themselves re-victimized – initially by the first offence, and then again by a system that is not able to accommodate their needs. Aboriginal women noted the lack of stringent convictions and sentences for sexual assaults, and a lack of understanding of Aboriginal cultures by those employed by the Justice system, delays in the responses by RCMP officers, and a lack of effective (federal) legislations like the Youth Criminal Justice Act.



***Inuit***

- There is a need for support for those being released from facilities by Corrections Canada was noted. Providing some sort of liaison with the families would improve the support networks and aid in their reintegration into the communities.

***Innu***

- No specific mention.

***Mi'kmaq***

- It was observed that changes to the justice system need to take place in order to better accommodate the needs of Aboriginal women. Women felt that the justice system was not sensitive to the Mi'kmaq culture. This could perhaps be alleviated by an increase in the number of RCMP officers who identify as, or are of, Aboriginal origin.

- An Aboriginal initiative within Justice is needed to promote healing (i.e. restorative justice).

- An increase in the visibility of Aboriginal peoples in positive positions within the Department of Justice is needed to ensure cultural sensitivity exists in the justice system.

***Métis***

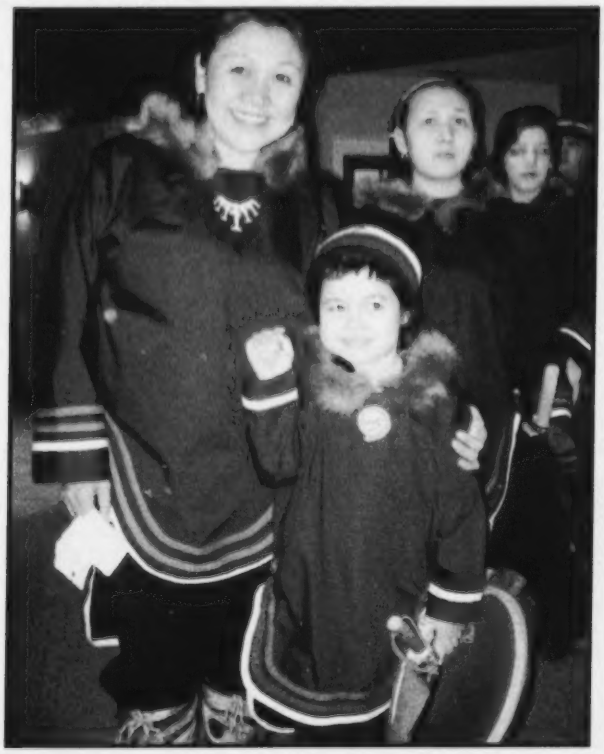
- There is a need for an increase in police (RCMP) along the South Coast and Straits.
- There exists a need for improved resources for individuals leaving correctional facilities.
- An increase in funding for Legal Aid would also be a step towards ensuring fairness within the justice system.

***Urban Aboriginals***

- There is a need for translators within the justice system in urban areas.

***Critical concerns raised during the consultation process relating to the justice system***

- Delays in the response times of RCMP officers, and the Justice system, mean that women suffer the most. RCMP delays increase if calls are received after 6:00 p.m.
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) was being used as an excuse for people to evade punishment for crimes.



## Education and Training

When discussing education and training, women mentioned a need for increased resources to aid them with the job process (resumes, filling our applications). Innu women did note that the availability of the internet and first year university courses were a vast improvement. However, it is felt that further funding is needed for the secondary school system. As well, there exists a need for improved career counseling at the high school level that would increase and improve high school completion rates.

***Inuit***

- It was felt that specific efforts should be made overall to improve educational opportunities for girls and effect change to the low educational standards that exist along coastal communities in Labrador.

***Innu***

- An awareness of Innu history and culture is needed among more teachers.

***Mi'kmaq***

- An increase in the level of communication and education between the community and the Chief and Council. Ensuring this communication would allow the community to support each other in making changes within the education system – for example improving education will reinforce the fact that racism can no longer be accepted by, or within, the community.

***Métis***

- Métis women noted that they lack levels of funding for education relative to other groups (i.e. for internet access, training and education).

***Urban Aboriginals***

- No specific mention.

***Critical concerns raised during the consultation process***

- An increase in the availability of student loans and scholarships for university.
- Aboriginal women need more access to tutoring and training.
- More incentives to keep youth in school so that more Aboriginal youth will complete high school.
- An improvement in career counseling for girls (as many women noted that boys and girls continue to be treated differently).
- More libraries, meal programs, and better technologies in secondary schools.

## Housing

The lack of affordable and quality housing is not just an issue for Aboriginal women located on reserves; it is an issue of exceptional concern for Aboriginal women concentrated in city centres. Urban Aboriginal women face a serious risk as they are isolated from the support networks of their communities. Providing affordable housing would allow them a sense of independence

that could be shared and transferred among other urban Aboriginal women, creating a city-based network of support.

***Inuit***

- The need for seniors' housing on the coast was identified as a major concern; it was noted that more money has been requested for appropriate housing.

***Innu***

- Innu in North West River and Happy Valley-Goose Bay were concerned over a lack of housing, especially low income housing.

***Mi'kmaq***

- No specific mention.

***Métis***

- No specific mention.

***Urban Aboriginals***

- Conference participants addressed the need for adequate urban housing for Aboriginal Women. This is especially relevant since they are removed from the cultural supports that would be accessible to them had they been living in Aboriginal communities.

## Access to Programs and Funding

The ability for Aboriginal women to be aware of the available options for funding, as well as available resources is crucial to the development and sustainability of strong vibrant communities. The knowledge of what is available is a strong tool in the search for cultural preservation.

***Inuit***

- No specific mention.

***Innu***

- No specific mention.

***Mi'kmaq***

- There is a need for understanding of the available financial resources that have been allocated within the community.

***Métis***

- Improvements may be needed to social services so that individuals can have their problems addressed by a person rather than an automated machine.

***Urban Aboriginals***

- There is a need to improve the access and availability of human and financial resources. Finding, getting and keeping qualified staff in urban areas who can deal with the concerns of Aboriginal women is a challenge.

- Adequate and sustained funding of projects is a concern.
- Quality and cost effective supports for Aboriginal people (and especially women) moving from their reserves to urban areas is needed. Aboriginal women in urban areas also want (and need) to be able to access a working group with other Aboriginal peoples.

***Critical concerns raised during consultation***

- More information and availability of programs to help women function in the business world was identified as a need.

## Employment

The availability of employment for Aboriginal people as a whole is a crucial part of maintaining valuable cultural ties within communities. For Aboriginal women, it is doubly important since it keeps them close to the cultural roots in their communities, and the cultural futures of their children. Being able to aid in the financial support of their families also increases the psychological strength of women, which further increases the strength of their culture and community.

***Inuit***

- It was noted that there were almost no opportunities for jobs within smaller communities. Increased research into the potential for culturally specific jobs for Aboriginal peoples was recommended.

***Innu***

- Innu women commented on the lack of gender equity in hiring for available jobs. There is no equitable allocation of employment which places women at a distinct disadvantage.

***Mi'kmaq***

- An emphasis on employment opportunities is needed for those living in rural communities such as Flat Bay.

- Mi'kmaq women noted that an increase in local employment opportunities would mean that male and female members of the community could remain closer to home, thereby ensuring continuity in the social fabric.

***Métis***

- Métis women expressed concerns around the lack of gender equity in hiring and job availability.

- It was also noted that full-time consistent work is hard to find and that the majority of the work is seasonal. This coupled with the lack of consistent and available childcare leaves Métis women feeling even more disadvantaged when it comes to considering employment options.

***Urban Aboriginals***

- No specific mention.

***Critical concerns raised during the consultation process***

- Aboriginal women face lower wages than men, which complicates the situation for single mothers.

- Concern was expressed over the poor living conditions experienced by widows and older single women.

# Appendix A
*What We Heard*

**BLOCK ONE: STANDING STRONG**

The following is a summary of *What We Heard* from the consultation process regarding the issues facing Aboriginal women individually, or as members of a family, community or group.

*Health and Well-being*

Health Care: Concerns included long term care (seniors are in homes because they have nowhere else to go, no other supports), lack of specialists in Labrador (dentists, psychiatrists) and the expense and social isolation of flying out (e.g. for child birth), the shortage and turnover of family doctors (many of whom are not taking new patients) and the lack of female doctors, health care costs and the lack of insurance and benefits for some groups, and language barriers. Other issues raised were lack of mental health and counseling services, care-giving as a woman' s burden (especially when men have to go away to work), and access to health care in isolated areas. Interpreters, cultural training, and empathy for Aboriginal people are needed in health care services.

Specific Health Issues: Alcohol and drug addictions, FASD (and its links to youth social problems and suicide), gambling (which some linked to the problem of child neglect), and bootlegging are problems. Suicide is a heart-breaking issue, and both Inuit and Innu women expressed the need to seek advice from other communities with this experience. Other health concerns are diabetes, the risk for heart disease and cancer, and obesity. There is a need for more health education and awareness, as well as physical activity programs in communities and schools. Teenage pregnancy and STD's among youth are concerns in some communities, and health education is needed, especially in the school curriculum. Accessibility for people with disabilities is an issue that is rarely addressed.

Children and Youth: Concerns centered on recreation for youth which many know will help address youth social problems and vandalism, good child care services and funding for children and families to access them, more education on parenting skills, and the need for more family resource centres, and their integration with school and pre-school programs.

Housing: Housing needs differ among communities. Some, such as North West River, need more housing, and lack of low income housing was a concern in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and for Aboriginal women living in St. John's. In Churchill Falls, there is the issue of IOC ownership, and women in Labrador City and the Inuit talked of the need for seniors' and long term care housing. Some expressed concern that Labrador Housing rent is not based on current income. Many were concerned about access to housing for low-income single parents, substandard housing stock in some communities, and discrimination in access. The issue of low-income women being unable to maintain their own homes was also raised. The need for emergency a shelter and permanent housing for those fleeing violence remains an issue.

Justice: Delays in response and rescheduling mean the justice system is failing women, especially in cases of abuse where the system leaves women feeling twice

victimized. In some communities, services are delayed after 6pm because the RCMP dispatch to St. John's. Some were unhappy with the Young Offenders Act, and some expressed concern that FASD is falsely used as a defense. On the whole, there is a belief that women are not treated equally by the Justice system, especially in regard to violence; light sentences for sexual assault, for example, mean re-victimization. Overall there needs to be greater representation in the legal system, and in Family Court, by and for Aboriginal people, and less discrimination by authorities. Cultural sensitivity initiatives are a good start, but the RCMP needs more training.

Other Issues: Some issues of concern to specific communities isolation, water/sewer infrastructure, transportation availability and costs (especially for medical appointments), and tourism opportunities.

*Violence*

Violence was a priority issue for many groups. Women in Goose Bay felt violence is increasing there. There was concern about teenage relationships, and that men often befriend police officers. There was a range of issues for concern: violence against women including mental abuse, bullying in schools, seniors' abuse, unrecognized abuse, hidden abuse, and historical abuse that is unresolved. Urban women were concerned about the lack of awareness within the Aboriginal community about violence issues, and expressed a need for more counseling for sexual abuse victims. Again, there was talk of discrimination by the justice system. Letting offenders get off lightly sends a message that crimes against women and the community are not taken seriously. Also, some authority figures, such as teachers, practice violence and get away with it. More women's shelters and safe havens for children are needed. We must break the cycle of violence.

*Education and Training*

Opportunities have improved with internet access and first year university in Goose Bay and Labrador City, but there are not enough teachers or books, and tuition is expensive, especially for post-secondary education. More funding is needed for scholarships and student grants. In addition, Aboriginal women need child care and tutoring to access training.

More funding is also needed in the secondary school system. There was concern about low educational standards in coastal communities. Cultural sensitivity in schools – e.g. acceptance of aboriginal spiritualism, and intolerance for racial insults on the playground – is needed, and teachers need cultural training. Girls need better career counseling; some are concerned that schools still treat girls and boys differently. There needs to be incentives to keep youth in school, and opportunities for women to complete high school. There were concerns about low literacy levels. There is a need for better technology, more meal programs in schools, and more libraries.

The Labrador Métis feel they do not have the same level of educational funding as other cultural groups. Those from southern Labrador expressed concern about the lack of educational opportunities there, and the need for funding, child care, and internet access.

*Employment and Income*

Employment: The Inuit feel there are almost no job opportunities in smaller communities, and the Innu and the Métis expressed concern about equality of opportunity for women's access to jobs and training. Métis from southern Labrador also noted the lack of full time work, since most jobs are seasonal. Child care continues to be a barrier for women, especially for single moms who can not find or afford it. In short, Aboriginal women need more job opportunities, equality of access, and supports.

Income: There was considerable concern about the low wages of women compared to those of men, and the difficulty of supporting a family on a minimum wage income, especially for single parents. Another key concern was the relative poverty levels of widowed or single older women. Pay equity is needed for women. There are still pockets of poverty in specific areas. The price of necessities is too high, and cost of living and assistance rates don't match.

Information and Access to Funding for Projects: The Innu, Inuit, and the Métis all expressed concern about the need for information on available funding for projects, and for assistance with writing proposals and making applications. Some said they would like more information about funding opportunities to assist women to enter business.

*Leadership, Voice, and Culture*

Leadership and Voice: Some women were very concerned about the lack of leadership in their communities. In some places politics is preventing cooperation, there is little or no accountability, and very little attention is paid to women's concerns. Sometimes women leaders are not respected. Many were concerned that overall women lack voice in their communities; they are not heard when they do speak, and are not encouraged to take leadership roles or supported when they do. Most said women must stand together and advocate for their own issues, since women's issues are often secondary or not on anyone's agenda. Many felt there is an opportunity here to build self-esteem and leadership skills among women, and to offer them support and encouragement. Aboriginal women and girls need more positive role models. More women are needed in politics. Federal, provincial and municipal officials need to support the Aboriginal movement.

Cultural Identity: Many women felt strongly that Aboriginal organizations must work to keep their cultures and languages alive for the next generation. There is still confusion about identity and language, and the Métis women felt their lack of status contributed to that confusion for them, and also to their inability to access benefits. There is still prejudice towards the Aboriginal way of life, and many women do not relate to their Aboriginal roots. Aboriginal women living in urban settings face cultural

stereotyping (including peer pressure from other Aboriginal individuals). This is made worse by the lack of culturally sensitive services. There is a need for greater exposure to and celebration of Aboriginal cultures. One group suggested an *Aboriginal Women's Week*. Aboriginal women themselves need more information on what is happening in the Aboriginal movement. Some need the supports of Friendship Centres, and assistance with healing.

## BLOCK TWO: RETURNING TO OUR PATH

Participants were asked to name strong women in their communities and give examples where people have successfully returned to their paths. They were also asked to comment on whether an outside speaker would be beneficial.

### Strength: Examples/Opportunities

Many participants gave names of strong women in their communities, and of women and men, alive and dead, who were good examples of returning to their paths. Elizabeth Penashue, who leads her people on a walk every spring, was named several times, but all cultures named many who made them proud. Besides these individuals, participants said that culture and hard work represented strength to them, as did mothers and elders. Many felt community support and leadership involvement are needed to help people be strong and return to their paths, and that women need to be part of the decision-making. There were many examples of returning to the cultures, including listening to traditional music, eating traditional food, teaching youth how to living off the land, returning to the country, dog sledding, hunting, trapping, fishing, sewing, wearing traditional clothes, having traditional sports at the Labrador Winter Games, and making crafts.

### Outside Speaker

While some felt Aboriginal women in Newfoundland and Labrador should come up with their own solutions and take guidance from their own elders, others felt an Aboriginal woman from a culture which had experience in turning communities around would be helpful. It's a big world and people can learn from others, especially about how to reach out to youth. Many felt Aboriginal women from different groups within the province could also learn a lot from, and help, each other.

## BLOCK THREE: PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

In preparation for making their plans and identifying needed resources at the conference, participants were asked to identify key issues for themselves, their families, their communities, or their regions/nations and what is needed to move these issues forward. They were also asked whether discussions at the conference should be in separate cultural or mixed groups.

Key Issues and Tools Needed to Advance Them

Innu women from Natuashish said women need to take care of themselves first before they can take care of their families, many of which are in crisis. Issues to be addressed are alcohol, drug abuse, and care of and education for children.

Sheshatshiu women felt community and leadership involvement are needed. Women need training opportunities, and encouragement to participate in community events. More community events which involve children and youth are needed. Women need funding to get started and advice and support from outside communities to work on obstacles that prevent them from moving forward.

Métis women listed health care, seniors' needs, low income families, being recognized as an Aboriginal people, preserving the Métis culture and way of life, educational opportunities, municipal infrastructure needs, sustainable incomes, informing, educating, supporting and listing to youth, and more awareness, education and services regarding violence. Specific actions were noted under each heading.

The Mi'kmaq women listed employment (including to keep men home), better pay, better education (so children do not have to leave), health care, and health insurance, securing cultural identity and spiritualism, continuing to fight for Aboriginal rights, the need for more women in leadership positions, and more support for Aboriginal women's issues from all levels of government and peers. The notion of unity, dedication by all, and communication and connection with the Aboriginal movement, including groups like NAWN, came up frequently.

Inuit women agreed with the concerns listed above, and emphasized the importance of leadership and community support to assist with addressing the issues.

Discussion in Separate Cultural or Mixed Groups

Most women felt a key purpose of the conference is to learn from each other. While some felt some women would be more comfortable in their own cultural groups, most felt it would be good to hear and learn from other cultures. Some felt it would also be helpful for all Aboriginal women to form a group to support each other – "more is louder". Still, the Innu and the Mi'kmaq thought they would benefit from discussions as a group, especially since each group faces different issues. The "consensus" seems to be that time is needed for both.

## BLOCK FOUR: OUR PATH TO THE GOOD LIFE

This section of the conference agenda will focus on developing plans. In preparation, participants were asked to identify their priorities for action and any structures or resources needed to achieve them in each community or as a whole. They were also asked to comment on what they would like to see as outcomes of the conference.

Priorities for Action

For the Innu and Inuit women, it is important that women work together.

The Métis elaborated on health, education, justice and cultural issues listed above.

Métis women from southern Labrador also elaborated on previous issues, but key threads were equality of opportunity for Aboriginal groups and women, leadership and capacity building, community support and ownership, cultural recognition and preservation of their way of life, availability of health, education and social services, and basic infrastructure.

Some Mi'kmaq sessions listed financial support, and the need to have an organized cultural provincial group. Some also mentioned women's input into negotiations with the federal government, and resolution of those negotiations.

Resources

Many stated the need for more assistance from communities and governments and more funding for such things as:

Leadership training

More services at the community level, with many specifics mentioned from food banks to sports for girls, mechanisms to prevent volunteer burn-out, training for women, and an Aboriginal newspaper

More resources to help Aboriginal women find their voices, and speak without fear about what they want

More resources for Aboriginal women from all over the province to attend conferences of this nature

More resources put into gatherings and "Following the Path to the Good Life".

Structures

Many proposed a Provincial Aboriginal Women's Group with a core group of solid leaders committed to improving the lives of Aboriginal women. This group would provide support for women and an avenue to have women sit on decision-making bodies such as health boards. There was also a suggestion of a web site for private issues. Others felt another group was not needed. Some were concerned about the impediment of current divisions in community. Still others felt a key aim of the group could be to educate women about government operations and available resources, and for women to educate government about their issues. It is important that such a group have dedicated resources, and full-time paid coordinators.

In addition to a provincial group, Aboriginal women's groups by affiliation are most needed.

A paid Coordinator to build on Aboriginal women's leadership would be beneficial.

Aboriginal women need representation on existing boards (zone, health, education, etc.).

An Aboriginal Women's Centre in St. John's could operate out of the Native Friendship Centre; at the very least, the Aboriginal Women's Group at the Centre should be revitalized.

Outcomes

Women were very vocal on the outcomes they wish to see from the conference. Their ideas include:

- Networking, sharing, making contacts. For women to work together and to understand that it is only by working together that we will be able to move things forward. More support for each other.
- For Aboriginal women's voices to be heard. For more women in communities to become leaders and to advocate for women.
- For other women to hear about the outcomes from this conference, for this to be the first of many, and for women to know where to go for help and information. For there to be follow-up and information back to the community. Follow-up from the conference could include a presentation by delegates to the community, a newsletter to participants, and a follow-up plan.
- An action plan to move forward, one that can be shared with governments and communities alike. Lasting outcomes from the conference in the form of information and capacity-building which we can use to better our lives. A way for us to return to the community with something concrete to achieve change.
- The establishment of grass roots community-level groups. The formation of an active and resourced Provincial Aboriginal Women's Group. "The future must start with women."
- Other outcomes included a Provincial Healing Conference for Women, a settling of who are Aboriginal, and the ability to reach out to children and youth.

Appendix B
*Conference Delegates*

**Inuit Delegates**

Zippie Nochasak
Minister of Status of Inuit Women
Nunatsiavut Government
*Guest Speaker*
*Facilitator*

Sarah Ponniuk
Nain

Charlotte Wolfrey
North West River
*Panelist*

Zipora Hunter
Happy Valley- Goose Bay

Georgina Allen
Rigolet

Annie Evans
Makkovik

Nancy Rose
Hopedale

Shirley Hefler
Happy Valley-Goose Bay

Ruth Flowers
Happy Valley-Goose Bay

Elsie Sheppard
Postville

Katherine Baikie-Pottle
Happy Valley-Goose Bay

Hilda Morris
Natuashish

Mary White
Nain

Bertha Holieter
Rigolet

Silpa Edmunds
Postville

Hilda Lyall
Happy Valley- Goose Bay

Sarah Webb
Nain

Andrea Webb

**Innu Delegates**

Mary May Osmond
Sheshatshiu

Mary Kateri Gregoire
Sheshatshiu

Mary Pia Benuen
Sheshatshiu
*Facilitator*

Janet Gregoire
Sheshatshiu

Helen Aster
Sheshatshiu

Mary Jane Edmunds
Natuashish
*Facilitator*

Caroline Andrews
Sheshatshiu

Kathleen Benuen
Natuashish

Mary Agathe Rich
Sheshatshiu

Angela Andrew
Sheshatshiu

Marlene Jourdain
Sheshatshiu

Clementine Andrew
Sheshatshiu

Ann Philomena Pokue
Sheshatshiu

Rose Gregoire
Sheshatshiu
*Panelist*

Angela Pasteen
Sheshatshiu

Virginia Collins
Sheshatshiu

Anastasia Qupee
Sheshatshiu

Marie Georgette Mistenapeu
Natuashish

Agathe Piwas
Natuashish

Monique Rich
Natuashish

Cecile Rich
Natuashish

Pauline Pokue
Natuashish

Nachelle Rich
Natuashish

Judith Rich
Natuashish

Monique White
Natuashish

**Mi'kmaq Delegates**

Judy White
Conne River
*Conference Facilitator*

Kelly Drew
Conne River
*Facilitator*

Mardina Joe
Conne River
*Panelist*

Denise John
Conne River

Darlene Joe

Elaine Myers
Castor River North

Starlene Thistle
Glenwood

Ann Francis Bauer
Clarke's Head

Olivia Ralph
Grand Falls-Windsor

Anne Marie O'Keefe

Conne River

Louise Bennett
Conne River

Priscilla Drew
Conne River

Grace Young
Burgeo

Michelle Gillett
Corner Brook

**Métis Delegates**
Margurite Hamel
Happy Valley-Goose Bay

Melissa Best
Mud Lake

Florence Oliver
Happy Valley-Goose Bay

Carolyn Michelin
North West River
*Facilitator*

Sherry Rowsell
Happy Valley-Goose Bay

Yvonne Jones

**Urban Aboriginal Women**
Cindy Lyall (Inuit)
St. John's

Ruth Winters (Inuit)
St. John's

Karen Miler (Mi'kmaq)
St. John's

Benoit's Cove

Kay Cashin
Flat Bay

Dale Young
Port au Port

Leona Cormier
Stephenville Crossing

Bettina Broomfield
Happy Valley-Goose Bay
*Panelist*

Olive Marshall
Charlottetown

Tammy Bridle
Red Bay

Margaret Pye
Mary's Harbor

Gail Sampson
Port Hope Simpson

Jenny Williams (Métis)
St. John's

Myrtle Banfield (Inuit)
St. John's
*Facilitator*

Maggie Harris (Inuit)
St. John's

**Additional Conference Delegates**

Evelyn Lidd

Madeline Benuen

Patricia Kimuksigak

Ester Williams

Germaine Benuen

Lynn Gear

Melinda Osmond

**Special Guest**

Bev Jacobs, President, NWAC
Native Women's Association of Canada

**Provincial Government Delegates**

Hon. Joan Burke
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
*Guest Speaker*

Madonna Connors
Secretary
Women's Policy Office

Jacqueline Howard
Communications Director
Department of Education

Mona Wall
Manager
Violence Prevention Initiative

Heather MacLellan
Assistant Deputy Minister
Women's Policy Office

Tracy King
Senior Analyst
Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs

Luanne Leamon
Director, Research and Planning
Women's Policy Office

Michelle Wood
Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs

Cathy Whelan
Communications and Research Analyst
Women's Policy Office

Leslie MacLeod
President, Provincial Advisory
Council on the Status of Women

# Appendix C
*Conference Agenda*

**The Path to the Good Life**

**CONFERENCE AGENDA**
*Happy Valley – Goose Bay*
*March 13 – 15, 2006*

March 13, 2006

| | |
|---|---|
| **7:00pm**<br>Church of the Northern Cross | **Meet and Greet and Early Registration** |
| **7:30pm** | **Welcome from Judy White, Conference Facilitator** |

Talking Circle – Kelly Drew, Keeper of the Circle

March 14, 2006

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|---|---|
| **8:30am – 9:00am** | **Registration – Church of the Northern Cross** |
| **9:00am – 9:15am** | **Welcome** – Judy White |
| **9:15am – 9:45am** | **Smudge Ceremony** – Kelly Drew |
| **9:45am – 10:10am** | **Joan Burke** – Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador |
| **10:10am – 10:30am** | **What We Heard** – Judy White |
| **10:30am – 10:50am** | **Break** |
| **10:50am – 12:00pm** | **Stone Sharing Exercise** |
| **12:00pm – 1:00pm** | **Lunch** |

Afternoon Sessions

| | |
|---|---|
| **1:00pm – 2:15pm** | **Standing Strong Panel**<br>Mi'kmaq representative – Mardina Joe<br>Inuit representative – Charlotte Wolfrey<br>Innu representative – Rose Gregoire<br>Métis representative – Bettina Broomfield<br>Urban women representative – Myrtle Banfield |
| **2:15pm – 2:30pm** | **Break** |

| | |
|---|---|
| **2:30pm – 3:30pm** | **Four Talking Circles**<br>Topic: *Our Issues – Our Strengths* |
| **3:30pm – 4:00pm** | **Reports from each group** |
| **4:00pm – 4:15pm** | **Métis Prayer** |
| Evening | |
| **7:30pm – 9:30pm** | **Community Feast/Banquet – Labrador Inn**<br>*Sponsored by Voisey's Bay Nickel Company Ltd.* |
| March 15, 2006 | |
| **9:00am – 9:30am** | **Inuit Ceremony** |
| **9:30am – 10:30am** | **Summary of today's activities /objectives** – Judy White |
| **10:30am – 10:45am** | **Break** |
| **10:45am – 12:00pm** | **Four Talking Circles**<br>Topic: *Preparing for the Journey* |
| **12:00pm – 1:00pm** | **Lunch – Guest Speaker** – Zippie Nochasak, Minister Responsible for Inuit Women, Nunatsiavut Government |
| Afternoon Sessions | |
| **1:00pm – 1:30pm** | **Summary of groups' concerns /objectives – Judy White** |
| **1:30pm – 2:45pm** | **Four Talking Circles**<br>Topic: *A Plan for Lasting Change* |
| **2:45pm – 3:15pm** | **"The Dancers" – a play by the Next Generation Guardians, Natuashish**<br>*Sponsored by the Department of Tourism, Culture, and Recreation, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador* |
| **3:15pm – 3:30pm** | **Break** |

| | |
|---|---|
| **3:30pm – 4:45pm** | **Plenary Discussion – Participants and Invited Guests** |
| **4:45pm – 5:00pm** | **Closing Prayer – Innu** |
| **5:00pm – 5:30pm** | **Media Availability** |

Appendix D
Opening Comments
Judy White
Conference Facilitator

As Aboriginal people, and particularly women, we have a responsibility to educate and to help others understand who we are. While other women around the world speak about feminism, or the woman's struggle, many Aboriginal women find it next to impossible to separate their experiences as women from their experiences as Aboriginal peoples. For example, it is difficult for Aboriginal women to speak of family violence without speaking of traditional healing.

While the roles of men and women in pre-contact Aboriginal societies were different, they were both seen as important and integral to the responsibilities for creation. Each were responsible for different elements, and each were necessary to make life complete. Upon contact with the Europeans, life was altered for Aboriginal women; new cultural focuses were introduced, and the cycle of economic activity changed. More importantly the way in which the contributions of Aboriginal women were judged changed. New standards were introduced that caused Aboriginal women to suffer greatly. They faced the double discrimination of being women and of being Aboriginal. Through all of this we have been able to remain strong and speak out about the racism, sexism and discrimination they have faced.

This conference is the first of its kind, and it serves as a way to remind us of the opportunities we have to share experiences, to learn from each other, to discover our honor and strengths and to make our voices heard in the search for the good life.

# Appendix E

*Address from the Honorable Joan Burke*
*Minister Responsible for the Status of Women*
*Government of Newfoundland and Labrador*

Good morning everyone.

I would like to say thank you again to those who helped organize the conference and have played a key role in making all this happen. This includes all of the women on the steering committee, group facilitators, recorders, translators, counselors; those of you who worked so hard behind the scenes.

Since I have held the portfolio of Minister Responsible for the Status of Women I have met some truly amazing women in this province. I have come to understand in real detail the opportunities, as well as the barriers, for women to participate equally in the social and economic benefits of society.

In the past year we have worked hard to help address some of the current issues that you face in your communities. We have introduced a violence prevention grants program specifically for Aboriginal women, and provided funds to assist the shelter in Hopedale. We are also acting on economic opportunities for women in non-traditional occupations, and now this first-ever inclusive Aboriginal women's conference.

We are also committed to working with the federal government on the needs of Aboriginal women in Newfoundland and Labrador. These are small steps but reflect our commitment – my commitment – to help find solutions to the issues and concerns you face.

I say "help" because you know best how to address the social, cultural, economic and environmental needs and issues. We must work in partnership with Aboriginal governments and communities and support the community-based and grass-roots solutions to issues faced by Aboriginal women and children.

In November, Premier Williams and I, along with Minister Rideout and MHA John Hickey, met with both Aboriginal leaders and a representative group of Aboriginal women prior to the First Ministers meeting in Kelowna. It was an amazing learning experience for us to understand some of the issues specific to each community but also those issues and opportunities that Aboriginal women share throughout the province.

It also became clear to us at that point that there needed to be an opportunity for women from all Aboriginal groups in the province to come together.

When the committee for this conference sat down and starting thinking about what sort of shape this conference would take, Kathleen Gorman brought forward this article by Kim Anderson – "The Good Life for Aboriginal Women"

But what does "the good life" really mean? Something different to each one of us, I'm sure. Health of body, mind and spirit; Social health; Cultural identity; Freedom; closeness to the land ; friends; family; self-sufficiency ; education; work; connection to the past; good futures for our children; clean environment; empowerment; equality; self-respect; self-esteem; self-confidence; healthy relationships, and so on.

Each of us have different ideas about what the good life would mean to us, and each of us have different needs and obstacles to overcome in getting there, but we also have unique strengths that can help us reach the good life.

During my trip to the North Coast, I was struck by two things: First, the many challenges that Aboriginal people, and women especially, face in their communities. And second, the exceptional strength of character Aboriginal women drew upon to face those challenges. How important you are to holding your families, children and your whole communities together. You are the backbone of your communities!

You rely on your strength as women, your unique cultures, your sense of community, your connection to the land (a connection that so many other groups in society long for). You have brilliant and innovative elders and leaders, people who are committed to sustaining your way of life. You have a uniqueness of character and an exceptional sense of solidarity.

It is these strengths, and many more, that you must draw upon and empower yourselves with over the next two days, and bring back to your communities – renewed. This is truly a unique and amazing opportunity to connect with each other and unite as women, as Aboriginal women – in this forum that has never happened before.

It is an opportunity for you to share experiences as Aboriginal women, organize and plan for lasting change with women from your community and other communities from around the province.

Over the next two days, you may determine how you want to move forward. That may mean bringing issues forward to government directly from your communities, forming regional organizations or perhaps forming a provincial Aboriginal women's committee that would represent your issues and needs. Your plans coming out of this conference and the report that will be developed will be essential tools to help us work together, achieving the good life for Aboriginal women.

Thank you, and here's to a positive and productive two days.

Appendix F
*Our Issues-Our Strengths*

## Our Issues- Our Strengths

Group #1

***Our Strengths***

- Language – Culture – Traditions
- Help each other – Stick together
- Presences of Ancestors
- Internal Strength – Taught by elders
- Hunting and Living off the Land in Labrador
- Resiliency of our people
- Language brought back to schools and communities
- Our youth – Getting our pride back – Learning culture and traditions
- Our elders
- Education
- Hebron Reunion – Moravian Religion
- Women have a voice again – Women's Groups – Healing Circles
- Women in jobs men used to have (Trade, Justice, Social Services)
- Our children help un strive forward
- Elders teaching language and culture
- Process of self-government
- We have survived
- Sharing
- Learning traditional ways
- Willing to defy rules
- English as a way to connect with each other.

***Our Issues***

- Losing language – forced to speak English in schools
- Poor education
- Need to bring resiliency to the youth
- Lost culture – have to keep our culture alive
- Last land
- Abuse of elders by clergy and teachers
- Need public acknowledgement and apologies
- Restricted hunting on island of Newfoundland – cannot live off the land
- Process of self-government
- Racism
- Stigmatization – Discrimination – Labeling
- Stereotyping – Negative Media – Prejudged
- Low Self-esteem and shame
- Alcohol – hard to cope with losses
- Domestic violence – few supports for women
- Men have lost traditional roles
- Poverty issues
- Lost generation

- Complexity of issues – lost between two worlds
- Denied identity
- Forced relocation – treated as slaves – No choice
- Government power and control
- Have to fight for what is rightfully ours
- Loss of spirituality
- Bullying – not being addressed – cyber bullying (email)
- Mothers need real support when things go wrong
- Youth are confused between aboriginal and non aboriginal ways
- Suicide
- More help for people when they have to go to city (escorts, translators, etc)
- Not enough childcare
- High cost to travel to court

Group #2

***Our Issues***

- Lack of cultural awareness in Corner Brook area
- Lack of support for children to take part in cultural education & lack of information
- Seem to be losing traditional ways, food, hunting and getting out in nature
- Lack of sensitivity and understanding in the Health Care System, especially in the hospitals – some people may not be able to speak up for themselves and get what they need
- What does zero tolerance really mean? Seems like we have a different perception than the police. We are in transition, but the province is still responsible for children in unsafe conditions
- Police not responding when they know where drugs and alcohol are coming from
- Young children not getting enough help with gas sniffing & drugs
- Recreation places are not being used
- Social Services moving children - need to do something to help - not just remove children from their homes
- Young kids are drinking alcohol and taking drugs
- It is hard to be a role model and stand up for my people
- Hard when you grow up in two worlds- how to keep traditions with your kids- older people need to come out and talk and link with the youth
- "It takes a community to save a child" we need to go to the Elders and get advice on how to save our youth- If not now-when? Start giving Elders more rights and respect
- The justice system is not working. Sentences are very light. They just go back and do it again. There is nothing to rehabilitate them when they return to the community (Back to the police not responding)
- Good for young Aboriginal professionals to be role models
- Elders used to be able to solve problems in small communities years ago, the RCMP should listen and take heed from the Elders

- Some Elders are not respected because they abused family members
- Maybe we need a definition of what an Elder is. Elders are people we can respect and who are not abusers or have addictions. Years ago, Elders also tended to be males only
- On the Northern Peninsula, we do not have any support for traditional education or other types of support. Also, all kinds of drugs in the community. Police are little help. Poor attitudes...."Teens will be teens"
- Sometimes the abusers and dealers are informants for the police and they receive police protection
- Suicide is a big problem. Sometimes related to needing drugs. Police were called and it took two hours for them to respond. We need more help with people to talk to young people
- Need a place where children and youths can go to get away from drinking and fighting at home
- Not enough of the traditional way of life in the children's life today

***Our Strengths***

- We have come along way since we were children, but we need to use our language again. I've started teaching the language to parents & children
- Desire to return to traditional ways and our understanding of why that is important
- We have a desire to get help for ourselves and to help others
- We have a lot of survivors. We are a strong people. We lived off the land and we have the knowledge we need
- Recognition we have problems and we have youth who want to help. Youth helping youth. Need to get them more involved in these meetings
- Being able to speak my language is strength. We are passing on language and culture to young people at Family Resource Center
- The Innu have been strong to hold on to language despite all the pressures.
- My strength is that I have learned from the past, what happened to my brother who took his own life. What happened to him I use to help others
- More support programs, after school programs, etc to help
- Grandparents giving support and knowledge of traditions
- Aboriginal women starting to speak up and are strong force to make change

Group #3

***Our Strengths***

- Mothers, wives, grandparents
- As strong as we let ourselves be
- Learn to put our strengths into a voice
- Need to heal - let out what we learned from life
- We are Aboriginal
- Have strength because we have lived life, use our voice, turn negative into positive

- Turn it around ( negative media coverage )
- Wisdom has made us leaders
- Keep our families together
- History helps us see where we have been and where we need to go
- Keep language and culture a live children and grandchildren
- Want youth to know and be proud of who they are and help them to get there
- Strong/ Supportive families
- Desire to learn/know more about culture and heritage
- Women +Aboriginal+Experience = we are teachers
- Circle of women = circle of life
- Standing up for ourselves, issues and beliefs
- Women coming together to discuss issues makes us stronger
- Even though our culture and language have been beaten down, still strong
- Other Aboriginal groups help each other when they need it. ( i.e. when Hopedale had a lot of suicides, Natuashish helped. Know the challenges and want to help)
- We are women, strong and responsible, and we recognize the problems in our communities
- Rely on one another - women who protect one another in communities and our children
- We can relate to one another
- Try to help based on our own experiences
- Strong desire for a better life
- Determination to turn negatives into positives
- Coming together, women are making positive change in leadership roles ( more women need to be leaders)
- Strengths from mothers and grandmothers
- Taking advice from the elders to make us strong and united
- Women in leadership roles, we are stronger than we think
- Powerful outcomes of healing circles, going back to our culture
- Sharing our culture
- Getting our youth involved and learning from them
- We learn and help one another
- Celebration of our Aboriginal Culture
- Connection to the land - It brings us back to our past
- Comes from being care givers - children and elders
- Need to recognize our elders more and pass on their knowledge to the children by spending more time together ( i.e. school sessions)
- We are the backbone, we keep our families together
- Help each other move through our hurt and pain
- Huge shoulders - family loads or for our friends
- Well educated women who are not afraid to speak out, strength in numbers
- Strength from the mistakes of the past
- We are feeling people - that is unique to US - a feeling connection that we should be proud of
- Willingness to share our pain, so we do not have to carry it ourselves

***Our Issues***

- A voice / council for everyone
- Women's shelter in communities that need them
- Find a way to fund a yearly conference to follow up and see that action is taken
- Grief counseling, law enforcement - so that drugs and alcohol can be stopped
- Shelters for those who need them
- More facilities for kids and teens to keep them away from abuse
- Facilities to hold seminars for kids/teens (i.e. seminars for kids around electoral process as a way to show our voice
- Funding for shelters/help for our children
- Sessions for people to talk about tragedies, hardship and pain. Place to go to talk and reach out to one another
- Child abuse/neglect - no safe place for women/children who suffer from abuse
- People need to feel safe
- Bootlegging - people willing to come forward
- Funding for shelter/ place for the youth
- Teenage pregnancy, affects of drugs, alcohol, and AIDS
- Bootlegging, drugs and alcohol being sold to young kids - even non-drinker bootleg
- Suicide
- Parental support- sometimes difficult to raise children with drugs and alcohol prevalent in the community
- Teenagers (15 or so) need help but have no where to turn or do not know where to turn (counseling and/or something for the children to do)
- Start with the children and teach them positive things before peer pressure mounts
- Children need to reclaim their culture and be proud of who they are - sometimes an identity crisis may arise. They are important, let them know. Teenage years are when kids rebel, be a positive role model for our kids
- Lack of childcare
- Lack of low income Aboriginal housing
- Lack of funding in urban areas for education
- Peer pressure
- Language and interpretation in urban areas
- Violence issues- child, spouse, relationship, etc
- Reaching out to youth
- Counseling for abuse victims and culturally sensitive resources
- Public awareness to reach women
- Cultural values, culturally sensitive
- Education on how to handle youth at risk
- Hidden abuse
- Lack of shelter services (South Coast of Labrador)
- No counseling resources (South Coast)
- Education to bring things out in the open
- Lack of priority on our issues in our community. Politicians need to make it a priority, not being talked about enough
- Women need to be part of the political scene and make our issues a priority

- Family violence
- Children removed from homes and in other provinces
- Solvent abuse

# Appendix G
*Preparing for the Journey*

**Urban Aboriginal Women**

Trained interpreters in the medical and justice system
Adequate housing
Skills training and employment
Aboriginal culturally sensitive component in day care run centres in St. John's
Aboriginal councilors for abuse victims
Human and financial resources is a challenge
Strengthening our elder and youth participation
More partnerships with other aboriginal organizations
Get qualified staff and get resources to keep them
Aboriginal Women's Centre
Secure money for languages
Consider the significant social economic needs of aboriginal people living in urban areas and then to properly fund the aboriginal organization i.e. Friendship Centre and housing
If the government is serious about closing the opportunity gap between aboriginal people we need to put in place an aboriginal strategy that is concrete and adequately resourced.
The need to provide quality and cost effective support to aboriginal people moving from their reserve communities to urban environments will continue to grow in the foreseeable future
The urban and area wants to be part of a working group with all other aboriginal groups.

**Innu**

**Long-term goals:** Women strive and maintain strength

**Objectives:**
Support from other women, local programs/resources
Encourage women to attend healing circles
Women will share their own personal experience
Encourage participation from other women
The two Innu communities should come together to meet each other and share their stories and experiences
Women's groups should be funded by government on long term basis
Elders should be paid for their services, as they are our teachers

**Drugs/Alcohol Problem (#1)**

**Goal:** To decrease the use of drugs/alcohol in both communities

Education – public awareness in the school and community
Visual Education is more effective
Elders should/will be used as educators
Provide self esteem workshops for all community members

FASD workshops should be continuous and on going
Recovering addicts should be teachers/educators to the community members
By laws should be supported and enforced by the government
Crisis phone lines should be installed in the community 24 hrs: counseling, immediate help

(Still budgeting problems)

**Suicide (#2)**

**Goal:** To decrease the number's of suicides in both communities

Prevention: local resources should be used to educate the community members
Public awareness
Intervention
Show youth that we love/care for them i.e. hugging, kissing
Family gatherings: councilors and elders present at this gathering
Youth activities should be on going, we as parents have the obligation to enforce these activities
Suicide prevention should be included in the school curriculum and community
Family support availability
All suicide attempts should be taken seriously
Crisis response team should be paid on salary (government funding)

Debriefing sessions – family members and friends
Both Innu communities will work on initiating a crisis response team
More social events in the communities
Alcohol free events

**Family Violence (#3)**

**Goal:** Promote healthy family lifestyle

Educate community members on the types of violence
Public awareness
Alcohol free events
Teach community members communication skills
Support groups - Sharing circles
Encourage family meetings regarding concerns
Apologies
Stories
Mediation process in conflicts
Leadership should encourage families/employees to participate in out post programs, country living is healthy
Men should be educated to start a men's group

**Our Plan for Lasing Change: Recommendations**

Consistency, commitment
Partnership between Innu Communities
Government support is a plus
Community leadership support
On going government funding for on land education and wilderness camps
Youth conference to voice their issues:
Suicide
Relationships
Drugs and alcohol
Peer pressure
Teenage issues

**Inuit Plan**

*References*
Nunatsiavut Government is now in the process of forming resources:

Nain: Safe House
New Daycare Center: Can hold 52 Children but licensed to take 14 (licensed by the Provincial Government)
Daycare in Makkovik: hold 11, takes four
Daycare in Hopedale: hold 20 and take 20
Daycare in Rigolet: take 14 and holds four (these numbers due to lack of trained operators)
No Inuit daycare in Happy Valley
Daycare in NWR. Unlicensed, but can take 4 children
Health and Social Development (Former LIHC)
CYFS
HR&C
Ulapitsajet Committee formed to deal with social issues
Committee Justice forums/crime prevention committee/Nipavut Women's Group
Family Resources Center – Different activities for all ages
Sportplex
Community hall
Victim services
Nain Care Committee
After school and child Development Program
AA
Crisis Response Team
Sewing circle
Rangers and Cubs
Okalakatiset Radio Society
Trust Funds

Hopedale:
Language Nest/Inuakkualet
Aboriginal
Safe House
Postville:
Women inspiring young women
Senior and junior rangers
Luncheon and crafts for seniors

Makkovik:
Senior and junior rangers
Recreation director (activities in the gym)
Women's sewing circle
Heritage Society

Rigolet:
Culture committee (promote culture & tourism)
Heritage society
Seal Committee
Youth participation on the rise
*Note*
All communities have Language Committees as branches of the Inuktitut Ukalalautta Society except Postville

Happy Valley:
Women's sewing circle
Local Health Committee
Drum Dancers
Moravian church strong
Aboriginal head start
Friendship center
Active youth group
Inokatiger Ukausirgit
Ikajuttiger
Labrador legal services
Labrador Health Board
Libra House
Crisis Response team
Cheap transportation for seniors

*Needs*
Monies for housing/ Senior's home on the coast
Lack of housing
Safe house for Rigolet – support & Hopedale run on volunteers
More of this conference
Leaders to pay attention and deal with Social/Alcohol/Abusive Issues

More youth programs – send treatment to community rather than moving the youth out
Practice what we preach
Ulapitaijer committee to link to other committee's
Women have no voice in Happy Valley - Everything in English
Translators are over worked. Need more positions as translators (interpreters for next meeting and a representative from Inuit on panel)
Support/meet with inmates being released from corrections facilities
Family group decision making project
More volunteers

**Métis**
We need to be recognized by the Federal and Provincial Governments
(This would ensure an equal footing with our Innu & Inuit sisters with regards to funding)
We need to get together as Métis women
We need an established forum whereby Métis women can bring the issues to the forefront
Our leadership as been male dominated
We want our Health and Social issues to be dealt with
Lack of basic services for women
Cultural Education
A membership process that is done in a timely manner
A chance to showcase our Labrador culture and hospitality at the next Provincial gathering
Educate our people that problems such as alcoholism, drug abuse, etc, needs to be talked about and find solutions to get rid of the shame
More mental health and addictions services
More housing
To be proud of whom we are as Métis

*A Plan for Lasting Change*
Metis Women's Conference to talk about issues. Our Path for a good life
Funding for an annual Metis Women's Conference
Community or Regional based Metis Women's Organization which would give a collective voice
More resources around the Mental Health Act
More resources funding for Health Care in general
Rid racism
Bring back our traditions in the school curriculum
Teach that we are equals; be proud of who we are, where we came from and how we have survived
Bring the youth and the elders together and teach respect both ways
Discipline and parenting skills, elders pass on their knowledge
Sustainable funding for Women's Shelters, Youth Centers and Women's Centre
Money for affordable housing, especially for women
Provincial Government help lobby or implement more RCMP
Funding and Support for women and men coming out of Correctional Institutes

Funding for better and more efficient health care
Funding for legal aid that ensures fairness
Social Services need to be improved; some people are spending hours trying to get a live person instead of automated service.

**Mi'kmaq**
*What do we have?*
Knowledge of our issues
A lot of people have personal experience
Begin Women's Groups

*Reserve- Conne River*
Very good program in Conne River (NNADAP, Family Violence, School Programs, Women's Night, Grief Group)
Conne River is very fortunate.
A lot of female professionals holding positions such as Nurses, etc.
Developed Justice Department
Band Council keeps the community involved through general assembly (Internal)
Have potential for lots of resources - land
Elders are knowledgeable of the land and speak the traditional language
Sister provinces (Nova Scotia and New Brunswick) maintain strong language and tradition and are willing to share and assist

*What do we need?* (Resources, etc)
Financing to help Women's Group
More equal involvement from women in each community
Policing needs to be more involved
Women's Shelter/Centre - Visit and get information
More awareness on violence issues (Women & Children) - Break the silence
More financial support for women (Violence)
Funding- Recreation for youth
Support/funding for the elderly- look after them
Employment- Big issue for Flat Bay
Health Care Issues - Burgeo
Leaders need to communicate - work on GROUND level
Lack of knowledge about resources - Info sharing - use what we have
Seniors Complex (Conne River)
Lack many resources
Sharing of cultural knowledge

*Priorities*
Communication among MikMaq in Newfoundland
Activities for the youth to get them involved and show they are important to the survival of tradition and culture
More sessions to bring people together
Need to speak with government in regard to "Internal Problems"

Drug issues look after our elders; record, honor, pass on all they know.
Children; opportunity to explore our roots
Disabled in our community

*Goals/ Destinations*
More emphasis on culture (language, traditional ways, story telling, elder ceremonies)
Respected by government
Involve the children - future
Off reserve getting the basics of language
Liaison with sister communities in Nova Scotia/New Brunswick
Communication/Education
Within the community/ Chief & Council to community members
Liaison with each other
Support one another/power in numbers
Instead of fighting among ourselves
Racism should no longer be accepted
Major changes in the education system
More Women Leaders
More Aboriginal Women's Conferences
More opportunity to socialize with other Aboriginal women
More opportunity for healing, sharing-we have so much history, differences need to be talked about, etc
Liaison more with Aboriginal Women in Conne River
Not necessarily political leader
Work toward gaining respect
More inclusive
Participants -copy of report to bring back to community
Justice System needs to change
Aboriginal women- experiencing racism
More supports for Aboriginal women on the Island (education, shelters, etc.)
More support for Aboriginal Justice Initiatives (Healing)
Hire more Aboriginal people to become RCMP officers
More Aboriginal people in general
Funding
Employment- more ways to find employment
Equal opportunity
Conference just focused on healing

# Appendix H

*Address from the Honorable Tom Rideout*
*Minister Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs*
*Government of Newfoundland and Labrador*

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, Minister Zippie Nochasak, Chief Anastasia Qupee, Chris Montague, MHA John Hickey and honourable colleague Joan Burke. It is certainly a pleasure to be here this evening, at the very first Aboriginal Women's Conference in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is very nice to see such a large turnout, and I would like to congratulate the committee who took the lead in organizing this gathering.

A conference of this kind is very significant, as it facilitates the relationship between government and Aboriginal women throughout this province. It is very important for our government to be able to hear directly from you on the issues that you face, as well as potential solutions.

As Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs, I can say without reservation that our government thoroughly enjoys and appreciates the cooperative relationships that we have developed with the Aboriginal women's groups in the province and indeed Aboriginal peoples throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is great to be back in Labrador and follow up on the consultations held with Aboriginal women prior to attending the First Ministers' meeting.

And I would like to take a few minutes to update you on the First Ministers' Meeting with Aboriginal Leaders that took place in Kelowna, British Columbia, last November.

We were very moved by the stories we heard during our consultations and the passion and determination exhibited by the participants as they brought their issues forward to government.

Let me assure you that your stories were heard and the Premier took the opportunity to relay many of them to the Prime Minister of the day, as well as other Premiers and national aboriginal leaders, at the First Ministers' meeting.

We took your determination to Kelowna with us and your stories of the pain and hardship experienced by Aboriginal people in this province were heard and considered carefully during our deliberations.

We were pleased to be joined at these meetings by Anastasia Qupee, Maryann Nui, Annette Broomfield and other representatives of the Aboriginal community.

We were quite pleased with the First Ministers' Meeting – a commitment from the federal government of $5.1 billion over a five-year period.

We were pleased that a consensus was reached regarding the need and the way ahead to improve outcomes for Aboriginal People in health, education, housing, economic development and relationships to ensure Aboriginal women and men have the same opportunities as other Canadians.

I know there has been some concern regarding the comments made by the new Prime Minister, that further discussion and refinements are required on the financial commitments.

However, I can say here tonight, without reservation, that our government will work to ensure that Aboriginal groups in the province receive what they have been promised by the Government of Canada.

The new federal Conservative Government has acknowledged the historic agreement that was reached in Kelowna, and accepts the targets that were established to reduce Aboriginal poverty, and we will work with them and with you, the Aboriginal people of Newfoundland and Labrador, to meet these targets.

The new Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs for Canada, Jim Prentice, has been very open to hearing my perspectives to date. On February 13, I sent a letter to Minister Prentice regarding a number of issues facing Aboriginal groups in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I indicated to him the need for the federal government to provide early clarification of its specific position on the federal funding commitments reached in Kelowna, so that these targets can be reached in a timely manner.

Besides discussing the Kelowna agreement, I have also indicated to the federal minister that the Labrador Metis Nation land claim has been outstanding for some time. It is critical that the federal government make a decision on whether or not to accept the claim and to do so in a timely manner.

The Labrador Innu Land Claim is currently proceeding towards an Agreement-in-Principle. I have encouraged the federal government to move quickly to provide federal negotiators with a mandate to resolve outstanding federal issues with the Innu Nation. Our government is doing the same on provincial issues.

I am very hopeful for substantive progress in the year ahead.

Another Aboriginal issue that is a top priority for our government is the creation of a reserve at Sheshatshiu. The Premier identified this issue in his letter to the three major political parties during the recent federal election, and I have also brought it to the attention of the new minister.

All parties are working diligently to have the land transfer agreement concluded in the coming months.

We are also working on an AIP with the Miawpukek First Nation on Self-Government and I have encouraged the new federal minister to continue with the efforts toward creation of a landless band for the members of the Federation of

Newfoundland Indians, so that off-reserve Mi'Kmaq can enjoy access to several federal Aboriginal programs and services.

December 1 marked a new era for the Labrador Inuit. We are excited to be working with the Nunatsiavut Government as they take on the challenges and opportunities associated with self government and management of their land and resources.

In closing, I would like to reiterate our government's commitment to you all. You have our support, and we will continue to listen to your concerns and work with you to find possible solutions.

Congratulations to you all on making this conference very successful and I wish you the best in the future.

# Appendix I

*Address from Zippie Nochasak*
*Minister Responsible for the Status of Women*
*Nunatsiavut Government*

Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. These past couple of days have been filled with energy, ideas, stories and many emotions. As women here have shared our experiences and explored our strengths, I feel that that young girl has a lot of hope in her future, if we all work together to make it happen.

This conference is called "The Good Life for Aboriginal Women." And what we're here for is to get ready to take the steps needed to make this good life happen. As a member of the new Nunatsiavut Government, I know that there are many opportunities and challenges ahead of us. We worked for 30 years to turn our dream of self-government into reality. And it happened, though we're still in the very early stages. So I'm inclined to believe that the good life we envision is possible too.

But what is the good life for Inuit women? What does that mean? How can we achieve it? For Inuit women, the good life is rooted in our connections—with the land, with our language, our culture, and our deep family ties. These are things that make us who we are, that make us feel at peace with ourselves. Inuit society is traditionally matriarchal. Our women have always been trappers and hunters, and we have worked hard recently to have women in what some might call non-traditional jobs such as welders. Most of our managers are women. Traditionally we have attempted to solve family problems within the whole family, finding solutions not only for women and mothers, but for men and fathers as well. This means that labels and problem-solving methods from outside often don't fit the way we do things.

Inuit culture has deep traditions of respect and equality. As a girl growing up in Nain, I learned these traditions from my grandmothers. I learned to value the land and what it gives us. I learned that we need to hold on to our language so that we can hold on to our stories, and pass them on. I believe these traditions are among our greatest strengths. But growing up, I also saw a lot of things going wrong in my community and our society.

The past two centuries were not very good for Inuit. Giving up our traditional way of life, going through resettlement and residential schools, being left out of many of the decisions that had serious consequences in our lives, all of these things created damage we're still dealing with. Loss of language and way of life became the reality for many Labrador Inuit. So many have had to live in poverty. Frustration and loss led us down the path to addiction and abuse. And many lost hope and continue to lose hope. There is hardly anyone in our communities who has not been touched by suicide. We need a brighter picture for this new century.

Way back in 1978, there was a study done on the issues facing Inuit women in Labrador. Some of the issues were: violence, abuse, alcoholism, poverty, lack of services of all kinds, lack of education. And these are the issues we're still facing today. But our land claim and our new government have given us hope that we can start to make some real change now. Now we have a voice. We will sit at the table with our provincial, territorial and federal counterparts and help shape that change. We know that a key part of it is working for Inuit-specific solutions. Nothing else will work for our people and our communities.

I say Inuit-specific because real solutions have to be connected to the culture. This is true for all aboriginal groups, for all cultures and types of communities. Once we commit to this, we can move forward. We can find the common needs and issues we all share. And we can look at the differences, and factor those in too. One of things we really need to do is hear as many voices as possible. We also need to find ways to give meaningful support to groups like TIA who have worked for years to improve the lives of women in northern Labrador. They're holding a conference on Inuit women's issues next month. This will be a great opportunity to hear those voices and make an action plan to go forward.

Last November, a number of aboriginal women met with Premier Williams, Ministers Joan Burke and Tom Rideout and MHA John Hickey to identify and discuss some of the key issues. One of them was advocacy. Aboriginal women face extreme violence in our communities. But who advocates on behalf of aboriginal women? It is not enough to leave this work to volunteers who work hard in the face of incredible odds, including lack of funding and support. The Nunatsiavut Government, all levels of government and their agencies need to be advocates. And this means looking at issues like lack of services and access.

A number of issues raised at the November meeting were key justice issues. There has been very little financial support in the past to address issues of violence. Legal aid has been very under-funded. Women have had to fight for adequate policing and for safe houses. Without such basic services, we can't have justice. Above and beyond these, we also need to have solid supports in place—financial supports, good health care, counseling and mental health services, child care services, family supports. Our long-term objective for safe houses is to not need them. We have to set goals for programs and timelines to eliminate the need for them. We need to make it so that communities themselves are safe.

Of course there is no real justice without real options. Everyone here knows the familiar story. A family is in trouble. In that family, a woman is abused. When it gets too bad, she leaves. But where does she go? How long can she afford to stay away? She might have to leave her community to get the services she needs. This cuts her off from her supports. She has few economic opportunities. She is poor and isolated. She feels she has no choice. She goes back. In isolated communities, there is also little privacy or real safety and few housing options. She is trapped. The cycle goes on.

The old familiar story points to a number of things. It points to the fact that there are deep social issues that need to be addressed in our communities. It also points to the need to develop infrastructure and services. We need to start this by looking at the realities of life in our communities, at their real, deep needs. We can't bring in models from other places and expect them to work. We need to build those models to suit our communities and our culture. Programs and services also need to be able to rely on solid, core funding.
One of the key issues facing our government is the great need for community infrastructure. Many people in aboriginal communities live in conditions that other Canadians would simply not tolerate. Inuit communities have felt the effects of funding imbalances. We have a critical shortage of adequate housing that is one of the top

priorities for our new government. How can we talk about the good life when people live without adequate water, sewer or heating? How can we tell our children the future is theirs if they have to live in those conditions? From houses to schools, we have a great deal of work ahead to raise conditions to the Canadian standard.

Laying the groundwork for the good life means having ongoing educational opportunities. At the very basic level, we are working to strengthen our schools so that our children have real choices ahead of them. We need to ensure that our language and culture are reflected and respected in educational settings. We also need to continue our efforts to ensure post-secondary access and training options, including supports for those who have to leave their communities for educational purposes. We need to improve technology in our communities, because it bridges distances and isolation.

In recent years, we have witnessed the development of Voisey's Bay. From the start, Inuit were there to negotiate an Impacts and Benefits Agreements that would ensure that our people benefited from development on our land. This is a very resource-rich land. As Minister of Lands and Resources, I can say that what we have learned from Voisey's Bay is that we need to take and maintain a key role in all major developments. We need to monitor progress constantly. We need to ensure that women not only have access to jobs, but to good jobs, and that they have the mobility to move up in their positions.

As with development, we need to monitor our own government as it grows and develops its civil service. We have to work to create mechanisms for women to advance into leadership positions and to encourage young women to achieve high levels of participation. Our Constitution is based on the principle of equality: we need to see that equality really working through the organizations we create and the projects we partner in.

In Nunatsiavut Government and in our Inuit culture, women are equal. I feel privileged to be the first Inuit Woman Minister for Lands and Natural Resources and Status of Women. There are nine Women in our Nunatsiavut Assembly of 21 members.

One of the things we're doing to support equality is looking at those who have special needs and need more attention. We've put in place a Director of Youth and Elders to make sure that the needs of these groups are not overlooked. Our elders have handed us down the gift of our culture. Our children are our future.

And our children really are our future. In most of Canada the population is aging, but not here. The Inuit and Aboriginal youth population is the highest concentration in the country. This means that investing in our youth has to be a top priority. It also gives us a lot of hope for the future if we give them the opportunities to be the best they can be.

So these are some of the major issues facing us, and some of our priorities and approaches to deal with them. As a government, we're still very new and the challenges are huge. We are committed to fulfilling our vision of self-government. The transitional government we have now is the first stage of leadership, and vision, as we move closer to

self-determination. Next fall we'll be holding our first election: I want to encourage women to be involved. We need your voices, your views and your skills. One thing is certain, and it is what we learned through our land claims process. Real change and real progress come from partnerships and good working relationships. I look forward to building on the relationships we've established and working with my colleagues in all levels of government and in other aboriginal organizations. The good life for aboriginal women? We can make it happen if we aim high, work hard, and build on our shared strengths.

Appendix J
*Standing Strong Panel*

*Standing Strong Panel*

Five remarkable women representing the various Aboriginal Nations within the province of Newfoundland and Labrador presented to the group their life struggles and their techniques in remaining strong as daughters, mothers, grandmothers; the epitome of strong Aboriginal women. The first presented representing the Mi'kmaq women, Mardina Joe, presented an overview of her life and its challenges. She emphasized how it was important through all of life's ups and downs to remain strong and maintain a positive attitude. The next presenter, Charlotte Wolfrey, representing Inuit women described her challenges as they related to survival and remaining positive for her grandchildren. The next presenter, Ninfa Burn, representing the Innu Nation spoke of her trials and tribulations as an Aboriginal woman both in her community and the challenges in the workplace. The next representative, Bettina Broomfield a spokesperson for the Métis, presented her struggles living in an urban area where the rights and voices of Aboriginal women were not often heard. The perspective of Urban Aboriginal women, represented by Myrtle Blandford, told of her struggles as they related to being a single parent in an era where is was not socially acceptable.

# Appendix K
*Invited Guests to Plenary Session*

Hon. Danny Williams
Premier, Government of
Newfoundland and Labrador

Hon. Tom Rideout
Minister, Aboriginal Affairs
Government of Newfoundland and
Labrador

William Andersen
President, Nunatsiavut

Tony Andersen
First Minister, Nunatsiavut

Penote (Ben) Michel
President, Innu Nation

Chief Anastasia Qupee
Sheshatshiu, Innu First Nation

Zippie Nochasak
Minister for Inuit Women
Nunatsiavut Government

Chief Simon Pokue
Mushuau Innu First Nation

Chief Misel Joe
Miawpukek First Nation

Brendan Sheppard
President
Federation of Newfoundland Indians

Chris Montague
President, Labrador Métis Nation

Charlotte Wolfrey
Nunatsiavut

John Hickey, MHA
Goose Bay

Ron Bowles
ADM, Labrador Affairs

Marie-Paule Mattice
Regional Status of Women Representative
Moncton

Agnes Rumbolt
Regional Director for Labrador
Human Resources, Labor and Emp.

Michelle Kinney
Deputy Minister, Health
Nunatsiavut Government

Geoff Richardson
Health Canada

Michelle Parsons
Mental Health Worker
Happy Valley-Goose Bay

Wilf Atwood
Department of Indian and Northern
Affairs, Government of Canada

Linda Andersen
National Crime Prevention

Jim Ellworth
National Crime Prevention

Insp. David Dort
Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Boyd Rowe
Labrador Grenfell Regional
Health Authority

Marge Learning
Vice President, Acute and Continuing Care

Delia Cornell
Labrador Grenfell Regional

Health Authority

Janet O'Donnell
Libra House and Labradorians for Peaceful Communities

Petrina Beals
Moami Status of Women

Wendy March
Labrador Friendship Center

Olive Williams
Labrador Legal Services

Theresa O'Keefe
Director
Conne River Health and Social Services

Geraldine Kelly
Addictions Worker
Conne River Health and Social Services

Irene Joe
Justice Manager
Miawpukek First Nations

Tammy Drew
General Manager
Miawpukek First Nations

Barbara Broom
Clinical Nurse Specialist, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Atlantic Region

Aisling Gogan
Director, Poverty Reduction Strategy

Jackie Lake-Kavanaugh

Susan Hoddinott

Suzanne Brake
Director, Aging Seniors, HCS

Pam Thomas
Manager of Victims Services
Department of Justice

Amy Goudie
Health Canada, Labrador

Janice Pike
NLOWE

Isabella Pain
Voisey's Bay Nickel Corporation

Paula Simon
Status of Women Canada

Leslie MacLeod
President
Provincial Advisory Council, Status of Women

Winston White
Executive Assistant to the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs

Georgina Allen
Rigolet

Nancy Rose
Hopedale

Ruth Flowers
Happy Valley- Goose Bay

Katherine Baikie-Pottle

Begina Anderson
Nain

Mary White
Nain

Silpa Edmunds
Postville

Sarah Ponniuk
Nain

Judy Manak
Postville

Shirley Hefler
Happy Valley-Goose Bay

Patricia Kemuksigak
Happy Valley-Goose Bay

Carolyn Michelin
North West River

Mary May Osmond
Sheshatshiu

Marie Georgette Mistenapeu
Natuashish

Monique Rich
Natuashish

Pauline Pokue
Natuashish

Hilda Morris
Natuashish

Justine Rich
Natuashish

Helen Aster
Sheshatshiu

Mary Agathe Rich
Sheshatshiu

Madeline Jourdain
Sheshatshiu

Sarah Webb
Postville

Zipora Hunter
Happy Valley-Goose Bay

Annie Evans
Makkovik

Elsie Sheppard
Postville

Lynn Gear
North West River

Kathleen Benuen
Natuashish

Mary Pia Benuen
Sheshatshiu

Agathe Piwas
Natuashish

Cecile Rich
Natuashish

Nachelle Rich
Natuashish

Mary Jane Edmunds
Natuashish

Judith Rich
Natuashish

Caroline Andrew
Sheshatshiu

Angela Andrew
Sheshatshiu

Clementine Andrew
Sheshatshiu

Ann Philomena Pokue
Sheshatshiu

Nympha Rich

Angela Pasteen

Virginia Collins

Mary Kateri Gregoire

Janet Gregoire

Kelly Drew
Conne River

Mardina Joe
Conne River

Grace Young
Corner Brook

Michelle Gillett
Corner Brook

Elaine Myers

Denise John

Darlene Joe

Louise Bennett

Priscella Drew

Starlene Thistle

Ann Francis Bauer

Olivia Ralph

Anne Marie O'Keefe

Kay Cashin

Dale Young
Port a Port

Leona Cormier
Stephenville Crossing

Cindy Lyall (Inuit)
St. John's

Ruth Winters (Inuit)
St. John's

Karen Miller (Mi'kmaq)
St. John's

Jenny Williams (Métis)
St. John's

Myrtle Banfield (Inuit)
St. John's

Maggie Harris (Inuit)
Mount Pearl

Melissa Best
Mud Lake

Margurite Hamel

Lori Morris
Happy Valley

Florence Oliver
Happy Valley

Sherry Rowsell
Happy Valley-Goose Bay

Betti Broomfield
Happy Valley-Goose Bay

Olive Marshall

Tammy Birdle

Charlottetown

Margaret Pye
Mary's Harbor

Drum Dancers

Red Bay

Gail Sampson
Port Hope Simpson

Natuashish Dancers

Appendix L
*Banquet Agenda*

**The Path to the Good Life**

COMMUNITY FEAST/BANQUET
*Sponsored by Voisey's Bay Nickel Company Ltd*

Church of the Northern Cross,
Happy Valley-Goose Bay
March 14, 2006
*Emcee – Judy A. White*

**7:30pm – 8:00pm** **Grand Entry**
Mi'kmaq Honor Song – "Wetjkwiteji'k Miski'k Sipu" - Kelly Drew
Opening Comments – Judy White, Emcee
Greetings – Honorable Joan Burke, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

**8:00pm – 8:30pm** **Traditional Feast**
Innu Grace – Caroline Andrew, Elder

**8:30pm – 9:30pm** **Proceedings**
Guest Speaker – Bev Jacobs, President, Native Women's Association of Canada
Choral Reading – "Learned Elder" by Rita Joe – Mary Jane Edmunds
Greetings – Isabella Pain, Superintendent of Aboriginal Affairs, Voisey's Bay Nickel Company Limited
Inuit Drum Dancers
Greetings – Honourable Tom Rideout, Minister Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs
Traditional Melody – Florence Oliver, Métis Elder

**9:30pm** **Grand Exit**

# Appendix M
*Cultural Exchanges*

**Day One**
***Smudge Ceremony***

***Stone Sharing Exercise***

*Requirements:*

- Enough small, attractive, vari-colored stones for everyone in the group.
- Have the group sitting in a circle, close enough to each other to hand off and receive stones easily.

*Instructions to the Group* (with rationale):

- "This warm-up exercise is designed to help us get in touch with three aspects of life that contribute to our overall health and well-being: a right relationship with ourselves; a right relationship with all other living beings; and a right relationship with the earth."
- "After everyone has selected a stone from the basket that I will pass around, we will each share briefly with the group: 1) our full name and some mention of its possible meaning or significance to us, its family or ethnic origin, etc. (expressing right relationship with oneself); 2) an animal that has been special in our life, as a pet, e.g., or as an object of fascination and interest (expressing right relationship with all other living beings); 3) a place on earth that is special to us as a place of beauty, comfort, good memories, inspiration, relaxation (expressing right relationship with the earth)."
- "I will start, and when I have finished sharing, everyone should pass their stone to the person on their left and receive the stone from the person on their right. This is the process that we will follow after every sharing. By the time we have finished the exercise, everyone will have had their stone touched by everyone in the group and will have touched everyone else's stone, and we will each end up with our own stone."
- "You may keep your stone for the rest of your life, or give it back to the universe at some point. You might keep it in your pocket, your pocketbook, on your desk, or on a shelf and it can serve as a reminder of each person who shared and with whom you connected during the exercise; it can serve as a reminder of this workshop/session/training/experience and of all the things that you will learn from it; and it can serve as a "touch-stone" to rub when you are feeling stressed."
- "My name is . . . . . etc."

*Variations*

- Right relationship with oneself can be expressed in a variety of ways: "My name is and my favorite color is . . . and why," "My name is and I was born in (country, city, state, province, etc.)," "My name is and my parents are/were (professions, careers)," "My name is . . . and what gives me great joy in life is . . .," "My name is . . .and when I retire I am going to...," etc.
- Right relationship with all other living beings can also be expressed in a multiplicity of ways: "My spouse/partner/children/grandchildren/ favorite friend is/are special because . . .," "What I value most in my friendships/co-worker relationships is . . .," "It is easier for me to forgive someone who has wronged me if . . .," etc.

- Right relationship with the earth can also be expressed in many different ways: "What I do to care for the earth is . . .," "One way that the earth nourishes me is . . .," etc.
- It is useful and helpful to process the exercise a little bit at the end and to allow for some expression of how it felt to do it.

***Métis Prayer***

**Day Two**
***The Tkullik***

***"The Dancers"*** A play by the *Next Generation Guardians* from Natuashish

**Concluding prayer from Innu Elder Monique Rich**